



Book Club in a Bag

Discussion Questions

The Library Book by Susan Orlean

1. What has your relationship with libraries been throughout your life? Can you share some library memories from childhood to adulthood?
2. How would you describe the fire's impact on the community? How about the community's rebuilding efforts?
3. In chapter 5, Orlean writes that books "take on a kind of human vitality." What role do books play in your life and home, and do you anthropomorphize them? Have you ever wrestled with the idea of giving books away or otherwise disowning them?
4. What is your impression of John Szabo? How does his career inform and shape your understanding of what librarians do?
5. Libraries today are more than just a building filled with books. How has your local branch evolved? Are you able to chart these changes and gauge their success within the community?
6. *The Library Book* confronts the issue of people experiencing homelessness patronizing the library. How do you feel about the L.A. library's involvement, handling of the issue and the notion of inclusion?
7. Andrew Carnegie is perhaps the most famous supporter and benefactor of libraries. Can you name a modern equivalent who is using his or her largesse to underwrite public works? Is it important for the public sector to have big benefactors or overall community support?
8. *The Library Book* chronicles the history of the Los Angeles Public Library from its origins to the present day. How were the library's ups and downs reflective of the city's ups and downs? Are libraries a fair barometer to judge the mood of a city or town?
9. Chapter 30 discusses a range of initiatives undertaken by international libraries and librarians. Do you have a favourite example that you would like to see replicated at your local library?

The above questions were taken from <https://www.simonandschuster.com/books/The-Library-Book/Susan-Orlean/9781476740195> to enhance your discussion of the book.

Author Biography

Susan Orlean grew up in Cleveland, Ohio. She studied literature and history at the University of Michigan. Orlean moved to Boston in 1982 and wrote for the *Boston Phoenix* and the *Boston Globe*. Later she moved to New York and began writing for *The New Yorker*.

<http://www.susanorlean.com/author/about/>

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